

**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
Sleep Inn, Minot & Virtual  
November 4 - 5, 2021**

**Call to Order:** Russ Cusack called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

**Roll Call:**

**Members Present:** Angie Bosch, Brenda Boehler, Russell Cusack, Jared Ferguson, LaRae Gustafson, Benjamin Johnson, Nancy Lundon, Gillian Plenty Chief, Bill Willis, Leon Dietrich

**Members Absent:** Jan Beddes, Shannon Cook, Drew Hanson, Deb Unruh

**Non-Council Members Present:** Aimee Volk, Damian Schlinger, Scott Burlingame

**Approval of August 2021 Minutes:** Nancy Lundon made a motion to approve the August 2021 SILC minutes as presented, Gillian Plenty Chief seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Approval of the November 2021 Agenda:** LaRae Gustafson made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, Brenda Boehler seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Correspondence – Russ Cusack:** NASILC has invited our organization to join NASILC for 2022. NASILC is organized as a nonprofit corporation to provide resources to SILCs across the nation and promote collaboration with their partners to advance independent living values. Voting membership is \$150 while associate membership is \$75 in which we would support the purpose of Independent Living.

**Brenda Boehler made a motion to become a voting member for \$150 of NASILC as presented, Leon Dietrich seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

Aimee will get the membership submitted.

**Treasurer's Report – Bill Willis:** Reviewed the Treasurer's Report. The report is only through September 2021 and the budget has not been entered into the state fiscal system yet.

The SILC Congress is May 16<sup>th</sup> – May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (the dates changed) in San Diego, CA. Russ Cusack and Brenda Boehler have asked to attend. The registration cost has not yet been determined.

**Brenda Boehler made a motion to accept the Treasure's Report as presented, LaRae Gustafson seconded the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

### **Report on APRIL Conference – Jared Ferguson and Scott Burlingame**

Jared reported that the APRIL Conference was very educational and easy to get into the sessions. In one session, Allison Barcoff gave an update on legislative measures that could affect Independent Living.

Scott Burlingame stated that there was an update on long COVID, and that Independent Living will be serving more of those clients in the future.

In another session, it pertained to an Independent Living Center in Wisconsin that was able to start a rural transportation program in which they provide hundred of rides per year. There was a lot of discussion around this and could North Dakota look into something similar.

### **Roundtable Discussion of Roles, Development, and Delivery of the SILC Annual Report**

It was decided that the main components of the SILC Annual Report will need to include; definition of Independent Living and centers; definition of the Independent Living Philosophy; who is the SILC; and success stories. **These should be ready by the next SILC meeting.**

It was decided that:

Definition of Independent Living and Centers – External Affairs Committee

Definition of Independent Living Philosophy – Internal Affairs Committee

Who is the SILC – Aimee

Success Stories – Governance Committee/IL Directors

### **Legislative Update and Individual Service Stories – Sam and Becca Winter, Justin, Senator Karen K. Krebsbach**

Becca and Sam explained how they found out about Independence, Inc. and how beneficial Independence, Inc. was to them during the Pandemic. Sam stated his dreams are to compete in the Para Olympics in multiple track and field events. Sam was the 2021 youth advocate of the year for Independence, Inc.

Justin shared his story of how he came to start working with Independence, Inc., the steps he has taken to find independence, and his dreams.

Senator Karen K. Krebsbach representing district 40 and the appropriations committee, talked about the special session that is coming up. She stated they will address redistricting the state due to the census data. There were 26 bills introduced for the special session including funding (about 1.2 billion dollars), vaccinations, etc. She was passionate about explaining that legislators are to open and ready to listen to concerns.

### **Committee Breakout**

### **Open House at Independence Inc.**

## **Friday, November 5, 2021**

**Call to Order:** Russ Cusack called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

### **Roll Call:**

**Members Present:** Bill Willis, Angie Bosch, Leon Dietrich, Brenda Boehler, Bill Willis, LaRae Gustafson, Gillian Plenty Chief, Jared Ferguson, Nancy Lundon, Shannon Cook, Russ Cusack

**Members Absent:** Drew Hanson, Deb Unruh, Jan Beddes, Ben Johnson

**Non-Committee Members:** Aimee Volk, Scott Burlingame, Kate Rock, Damian Schlenger

### **Local Advocacy Panel – Aaron Moss, Lisa Olson, and Josh Wolsky**

Aaron Moss is the Crime Prevention Officer with the Minot Police Department, Lisa Olson is the Alderwomen with the Minot City Council and Josh Wolsky is the Interim Director of the Minot Downtown Business and Professional Association.

They all described how they are connected to Independence, Inc. and the relationships they have built. They talked about how full community inclusion can make the community active. They also discussed barriers that they are working towards at this time.

### **Quarterly Director's Report:**

**Scott for Independence, Inc.:** See attached.

**Angie for Freedom:** See attached.

**Randy for Options:** See attached.

**Aimee for Dakota Center for Independent Living:** See attached.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Internal Affairs – Nancy Lundon:** See Grid

**External Affairs – Drew Hanson:** See Grid

**Governance Committee – Russ Cusack:** Leon and Jan have both been appointed by the Governor and attended orientation.

Vacancies:

1 in Quadrant 2 Grand Forks area

2 in Quadrant 3 Fargo area

State Agency rep, Bill Willis, will be open in March 2022. Bill found his replacement and Ally Brown and she has already submitted her application.

The Governance Committee will work on getting success stories for the annual report.

**State Rehabilitation Council – Russ Cusack:** The State Rehabilitation Council met October 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a proposed change to the Higher Ed Participation policy regarding the fee scale. The council asked to have some changes and clarifications that they will review at the next meeting.

Committee on Aging – Aimee Volk: Some senior centers are not fully open as seniors still prefer to take meals home or have them delivered. Food pantries in Amidon and Dickinson still serving high numbers. Nancy gave an update on the DOJ settlement. DHS increased the amount family members can receive to \$150/day to take care of family members in their (caregiver) home. This allows family members a living wage if they need to quit their jobs to care for family members in their home. People are taking family members out of nursing homes against medical advice because they do not like the restrictions put on them during COVID. The outcome of this is once family members are home, there are issues finding HCBS because the move was so quick. Aging services Companion Program is serving about 130 people, but they think that could increase if they find someone to administer that program because their staff is maxed out with work.

Traumatic Brain Injury Council – Shannon Cook: Next meeting is November 19<sup>th</sup>.

Olmstead Commission – Scott Burlingame: The DOJ impended a state plan. The CILs will continue to be overwhelmed with MPF cases. There have been dollars allotted to expand QSP programs. They are doing a variety of workgroups.

**Public Comment:** N/A

The next SILC meeting will be February 3-4, 2022, in Bismarck, ND and will have the virtual option.

**Brenda Boehler made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Jared Ferguson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**

## **Directors Report, Independence, Inc. - Scott Burlingame, Executive Director - 11/4/21**

### **Transitions:**

During the last federal fiscal year, we transitioned 43 people from institutional settings (this includes using ADRL funds for people who transitioned from transitioned 13 people who lived in an ACL Defined institution, and another 30 people from other congregant living arrangements. For comparison's sake, the year before we transitioned 5. We have also assisted dozens of people who homeless or at risk of becoming homeless from entering an unsafe environment congregate living environment.

We have done all this as a result of the growth of the MFP program, ADRL Cares Act funding, and our own CARES Act funding. The amount of work behind all of these programs are significant, and it has put a tremendous amount of stress on or direct service staff.

This stress has been made worse by the fact that we have had open positions since APRIL and have hired four (soon to be five) new staff since June 1. The amount of time spent on interviews and the onboarding process cannot be understated when comes to putting stress on our system.

### **New Staff**

Since the last time we met, we have added the following staff:

**Micah Olson**, Independent Living Advocate: Micah works to remove structural and systemic barriers that keep people with disabilities of all ages from achieving their dreams by providing individual advocacy and mentoring. Micah works under the B/C Grants.

**Haley Lolmaugh**, Independent Living Specialist: Haley provides a variety of services including independent living skills training, advocacy, and information and referral to individuals with all types of disabilities. She also provides pre-employment skills training to youth in a school-based setting. Haley is paid out of the B/C Grants and the Pre-ETS Grants.

**MacKenzie Larson**- Peer Support Specialist started on 10/20. MacKenzie provides peer support for people who are part of our Free Through Recovery and Community Connect programs. In this role, she uses her lived experiences to promote a sense of belonging and serve as a positive role model.

**Laura Mendez**- Independent Living Advocate: This position will assist people with disabilities to transition from a nursing facility back into the community and to provide follow-up case management.

### **Community Advocacy:**

In my role as the President of Affordable Housing Developers, Inc. I was able to attend a ribbon cutting at Courtyard Apartments in Rugby. This unit was built in approximately 1981, the property consists of one 8-plex and three 4-plex buildings with a total of 20 units - 11 one-bedroom units and 9 two-bedroom. The property had fallen into disrepair and needed over \$2 million in funding to make much needed improvements. Now the unit is more accessible and will remain affordable housing for another generation. This is the kind of project ADHI does on a regular basis and why I am happy to be working with them.

### **APRIL**

My term on the APRIL Board came up at the Annual Meeting last week, and I did not run for reelection. My time on that board has had a lot of benefit, but it is time to move on to whatever is next.

### **Building Dreams Gala:**

We held a community awareness/fundraiser on 9/11 at the Dakota Territory Air Museum. Our guest speaker was Lindsay Guentzel. She is a writer and television/radio personality who has covered everything from breaking news and politics to food and the Minnesota Twins. Her work has appeared on ESPN, FOX Sports, The New York Times, CBS Radio, and on local networks like WCCO Radio and KARE-11.

A vocal advocate for mental health resources and awareness, Lindsay has openly shared her journey through depression and anxiety. Most recently, Guentzel has shared her later-in-life ADHD diagnosis and the effects it has had on her both personally and professionally.

Our event had about 100 people in attendance, and Lindsay did a great job of talking to the audience about how she has thrived in life as a person with a variety of mental health disabilities. She made it very clear that acceptance and advocacy were necessary for her story to be possible. Our other speaker of the night was our board member Kyle Erickson. Kyle is a comedian who uses humor which he describes as “‘holy crap, it’s a dude in a wheelchair.” The night of the event also allowed us to highlight one of our biggest advocacy issues. Kyle uses the taxi system for transportation after hours. Unfortunately, he has had problems getting home from events on many occasions. He has filed complaints with the Police Department, and they have asked him (or anybody else who has problems) to report them right away. The night of our event, it took almost 2 hours after the event for him to get his ride.

### **Building News:**

The last of the construction was completed the first week of September. Right now, the only thing we have left is our accessible parking signs, but they should be up next week.

### **Videos:**

We have made the following videos to help share the story of what we do.

**Jeanette:** <https://youtu.be/VS2fNdfAalg>

**Sam:** <https://youtu.be/x9CqJXEEVcq>

**Judy:** <https://youtu.be/6HeJeyi6sbw>

## Freedom Director's Report – November 2021

### Fargo

- Living Well 101 IL Skills class began on September 10, 14 people are attending the hybrid class (both in person and via Zoom). There are adults and students from Fargo Public and West Fargo Public schools attending.
- There have been 0 **MFP** transitions since the last meeting. Working with 7 referrals.
- There have been 6 **ADRL** transitions since the beginning of September. Working with 34 referrals.

### Jamestown

- There have been 2 **MFP** transitions since September. Working with 9 referrals.
- 2 **ADRL** transitions since September. Working with 0 referrals.

### Lisbon

- There has been 1 **MFP** transition since the last meeting. Working with 0 referrals.

### Wahpeton

- Joyce Wolter, our advocate, has been on leave since the middle of July. We have phones and mail coming to the Fargo office, a Fargo advocate, Merri Christlieb, goes to the office one day per week.
- There have been 0 **MFP** transitions since the last meeting. Working with 1 referral.

### ND Ramps

- 7 ramps were placed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

### Fall Event recap

Our Fall People's Choice Awards Ceremony was all held virtually. This was the first time we had put together a show virtually and it all came together with the help from Chamber Six Media. We had a motivational keynote speaker: Mark Lindquist who spoke about passion in the work that we do for people with disabilities. It also included two testimonials, 6 award recipients, staff and board years of service recognition. The emcee was Dan Michaels accompanied by Angie. People were able to buy tickets online to attend this exclusive event. Those who purchased got access to the special Zoom link when it aired live. Following the event, everyone who was registered got a recording sent out to them to be able to watch again.

## **Options RCIL SILC Report**

November 4-5, 2021

**New Staff:** This past September Options long time ADA Specialist was hired by the Grand Forks Vocational Rehabilitation Office where he will be a Rehabilitation Counselor. Since then Options hired new staff person Brooke Peterson who is from the area but relocated back home from Minot where she has worked the last eight years as a Computer Assisted Draftsperson. She has experience being part of the drafting team working on hospitals, private businesses, apartments and private homes. She is currently being trained so she can acquire her ADA Coordinator Certification.

### **Options Accessible Deer Hunt:**

Options held its 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Accessible Deer Hunt at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge located 55 miles east of Grand Forks. Usually, the Accessible Hunt is open for 20 participants with the goal of mixing hunters with disabilities who have experience hunting with persons who are new to hunting. It is designed to enable people to get to know each other in hopes of setting the stage for peer interaction. During the last two years Options has had to modify its usual practice due to Fish and Wildlife's restriction on visitor's services on Refuges. Consequently, Options modified its hunt so only 10 hunters could attend, with slotted times to come onto the Refuge to register each day to reduce the possibility of hunters and volunteers cross contaminating each other if they contracted COVID and were not aware. Usually, the Accessible Hunt offers hunters and volunteers alike a noon and evening meal to facilitate interaction both this year and last we had to drop this programming. On a usual year when the visitor's center is open with no restrictions due to COVID Options will utilize up to 65 Volunteers, this year in contrast there were seven. During this year 10 people hunted with one person a resident of North Dakota, of those 5 people were successful in shooting a deer. If you or someone you know is interested in hunting they can simply call Options and ask for their name to be entered on our hunt list and we will send them an application when that time arrives.

**ND Relocations:** Breaking record year; 34 relocations with 16 MFP, 17 ADRL and one regular grant.

**ND Diversion:** Seven diversions for fiscal year.

Currently Options is working with 72 individuals, 38 are MFP and 34 are ADRL. This means we have 38 individuals left to relocate out of mainly nursing facilities and the referrals keep coming. The Staff have been overwhelmed with high numbers and difficult to manage at times. We have requested for additional MFP staff to be hired upon approval of the MFP budget. With only two staff in MFP, other DS staff have had to assist in relocations also. The time invested to relocate someone back to the community is high in order to be thorough and safely transition someone back to the community of their choice.

**Trainings:** Dave and Mike conducted a "What is Options" to 51 PT's at UND.

### **COVID:**

Options has analyzed its services with the end goal of preventing the spread of COVID. One of the main areas Options has examined is its durable medical equipment loaner closet to ensure equipment which is donated, returned, and given out is germ free. To accomplish this Options has changed a number of its previous protocols to ensure the equipment does not become a point of



infection for our staff or people we serve. Options has used CARES Act funding to purchase ultraviolet lights used in a hospital setting as our first line of defense by taking all equipment coming to us and placing them under the light to inhibit contact contamination. To use the lights, we set up heavy canvas curtains (normally used to separate welding areas) with shelving where the ultraviolet lighting is installed so it can encircle each item by 360 degrees. Another deficiency identified is Options basement is made up of concrete block, since block is porous we were concerned that the surface areas could not be cleaned in a manner to insure they were not a risk for cross contamination. Because of this we are working on getting all the surfaces tiled so we can sanitize them. Additionally, we have purchased large plastic bins which open from the top and front so used equipment can be placed within them at major cities in our service area. In the past when we borrowed a piece of equipment to a person living in an area close to an outreach office equipment was brought to that office. Once given to the staff person it was usually stored within their office until it could be placed in their car and taken to our main office to be cleaned. Because of the dangers to our staff, we decided to set up these bins so articles can be dropped off and then picked up utilizing a route system to reduce the possible exposure to staff and their families.

## **Dakota Center for Independent Living – November 2021**

### **MFP/ADRL - MFP Transitions – 6, ADRL Transitions 0**

Meeting twice/month with Jake and TC'S from other CIL's to discuss the transition process and issues with transitions. Housing and 24-hour care are a couple of issues

Meet once a month with Program managers and HCBS Caseworkers to discuss mutual cases in Territory's 2, 7, and 8.

### **CARES**

Sent non-perishable food (canned chicken and tuna fish, soup, cereal, pasta, toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and shampoo, toilet paper, paper towels). Amen Food Pantry Dickinson. Working with one other food shelter but will be contacting more.

### **Agency**

We held our annual Consumer Appreciation Supper and Elvis was in the building. Listened to Elvis, two consumers played their guitar, and each sang and played trivia.

DCIL staff went to the Parkinson Seminar and set up the DCIL information and the AT equipment. Seventy-eight people attended the seminar, and 63 went through the booth, and staff provided information on DCIL services. In addition, there were 31 people asked for the information on AT for the critter catcher, leg lifter button puller, the outlet remote, cup handle, cutting board and the bottle opener.

### **Technical Assistance**

Completed 3 USDA Assessments for accessibility in McClusky-apartments, Hettinger-Adams County Development Center and Dickinson-Roosevelt-Custer Regional Council.

A few issues were found: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and no elevator, no accessible parking, bathrooms not accessible, no hand-rails on ramps, and no level landing into entrance. Gave technical assistance to a contractor who is building a ramp for an ADRL individual in Mercer County.

Attending meetings at the capital on the accessibility features. Representative Nelson said it would probably be good for the legislators to tour these buildings with PWD to see what the issues are because they do not know, and it would be a learning experience for them. They will be adding 3 family bathrooms- one of them will have a changing table for adults. Do we want John Boyle to attend our meeting in February and talk about the changes?

### **Trainings**

Staff attended Virtual Landlord/Service Provider Session "Bridges Out of Poverty" presented by MFP Housing. Discussion on economic environments, difference between generational and situational poverty, building relationships of mutual respect between economic classes.

Staff received SHIC training for staff to do Medicare Part D enrollments. We received a SHIC Sponsor Contract of \$2800.

Staff participated in the High Plains Fair Housing, "Design and Construction Requirements of Fair Housing Act." Presenters were Kelly and Michelle with High Plains Fair Housing. A video and review of the seven main components of what is required, as bare minimums, for HUD housing projects were covered. Also, refreshers on how to contact and when to contact for fair housing challenges and questions.

A staff person is attending Certified Brain Injury Specialist training. This was a sixteen-hour training. Forty-two individuals from across the USA participated in interactive training.

**Outreach**

Shared teaching driver's permit course at Bismarck High School, Legacy High School, and Standing Rock Community High School.

YESS members were involved in the Down Syndrome Buddy Walk held at the State Capitol. Very well attended. 5 YESS members attended. They talked to 50 people about YESS.



